



MAINEDOT

Maine Department of Transportation

FOR RELEASE: January 20, 2006

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Wayne Frankhauser
MaineDOT Project Manager
(207) 624-3490**

**David Chapman
First Student
(207) 626-5569**

**NEW SCHOOL BUS ROUTES BEGIN JANUARY 23rd
TO PREPARE FOR MEMORIAL BRIDGE CLOSURE**

AUGUSTA – The three-month closure of Augusta Memorial Bridge is scheduled to begin on Sunday, February 26th. As that day approaches, MaineDOT has been working closely with the Augusta School Department and First Student, the company contracted to provide bus service, to ensure that buses run safely and on time during this full closure. Augusta school buses will begin using new west-side traffic routes as early as January 23rd.

MaineDOT, Augusta Public Schools and First Student all agreed that this timing would work well, given that downtown Augusta traffic changes would begin the week of Presidents Day, February 20th, when schools will be on vacation. "Getting started a few weeks early will allow bus drivers to get used to the new routes well before the bridge closes, ensuring that kids will get to school on time," said Stephen Landry, MaineDOT Assistant State Traffic Engineer. Mr. Landry traveled the routes in the school bus to help identify places that might prove difficult for school buses to navigate. "We wanted to make sure that the buses would be able to make all the turns safely and efficiently on this new route. We're confident they can do that."

First Student has already notified the parents of children on the affected routes, all of which are on the west side of Augusta. The company is confident that there will be no confusion. "We have done this kind of thing before and have always been able to adjust well," said David Chapman of First Student.

MaineDOT will continue to communicate its traffic plans with the public as the three-month closure of the Augusta Memorial Bridge approaches. Maps showing the new downtown traffic plan and an e-mail alert system are available at www.mainedot.gov.